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Inhalt

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Divine Masters, Human Disciples. The Idea of Gods as Teachers and Its Development in Greek Poetry and Philosophy

In archaic Greece there were no state-organized schools, nor was there any other structured or institutionalized form of education. However, Ancient Greeks did learn things they considered useful, and they learned them from the elders or through the medium of poetry.[1] Since no written texts were used for educating the young in archaic Greece, a teacher's authority, essential for his status and esteem, was based either on his advanced age or on entities more knowledgeable and powerful than humans—divine beings. In this paper, I shall investigate the manifold ways in which Greek gods acted as human masters.[2] The idea of divine teachers pervaded all aspects of Ancient Greek life. I focus on three topics: the earliest attestations of the idea of gods as teachers of men, gods teaching poetry, and gods teaching rituals.

1 Divine Education in Early Greek Epic

An illustrative example of the archaic model of education as emulation of the older, wiser man, is the relationship between the hero Achilles and his teacher Phoinix. In the ninth book of the *Iliad*, Achilles' old teacher reminds his disciple of the reason why he followed him to Troy:

> The old horseman Peleus sent me out with you on the day when he sent you from Phythia to join Agamemnon—you were a child, with no knowledge yet of leveling war

1 For poetry as a chief medium for teaching in archaic Greece, Havelock 1963, 36–60; Nagy 1989, 8–10; Thomas 1992, 113–117.

2 I use the word "master" as a synonym for "teacher," mainly in the following meaning: "A man or (occas.) woman of whom a person is a disciple; the teacher or practitioner (of religion, philosophy, art, etc.) from whom a person has chiefly learned, or whose doctrines or example a person follows," *Oxford English Dictionary* s. v. "master," 12. (Third edition, March 2001; online version September 2011, available at http://www.oed.com/view/Entry/114751 [accessed on 20 February 2012].) On the terminology, see Renger 2010 and Renger 2012.

> or of debate, where men win distinction. So he sent me out to teach you all these things, to make you a speaker of words and a doer of deeds.[3]

Phoinix here figures as a representative of Achilles' father Peleus. His authority as a teacher is based on the fact that he is older than Achilles, but also on the careful selection Achilles' father Peleus made. Peleus' paternal authority is bestowed on Phoinix, and Achilles assumes the role of the child. Phoinix's goal is to enable Achilles to take up his position in aristocratic society—to talk and behave like a distinguished member of the elite. Phoinix is skilled in the codes of behavior in aristocratic society and is thus able to act as a master of wisdom.[4]

Another eminent old man who serves as an important model to Homeric heroes is Nestor, who often indulges in lengthy speeches describing his acts as a young man.[5] Even though he is too old to be a "doer of deeds," as a skilful and enthusiastic "speaker of words" Nestor is able to recall his past acts and bring them up as good examples for Greek warriors in times of need.

Nestor's exceptional status in the Greek camp as a settler of disputes and a source of highly prized advice is legitimized by his remarkable longevity. He is already ruling a third generation of men.[6] This advanced old age, as well as his exploits including battles with legendary adversaries such as Heracles, the Centaurs, and the invincible Siamese twins give Nestor almost superhuman status. The intersection between the human and divine spheres which Nestor embodies is relevant for the status of a teacher in general. In Greek culture, a great teacher often negotiates the boundary between human and divine.

Another famous superhuman teacher of heroes was the centaur Cheiron. According to early Greek myth, he was "the most righteous of the centaurs,"[7] immortal, and a son of gods.[8] He taught several heroes in the arts of hunting, warfare, music, and healing.[9]

3 Homerus, *Ilias* 9.438–443. All translations of the *Iliad* are by M. Hammond (Hammond 1987).

4 According to Wach's important study published in 1925 (see Renger 2012, 14–19 on its context and influence), the difference between a master and a teacher is that although both possess knowledge, a master has a charismatic authority and his relationship with a disciple is determined by his own persona and personality. In the Archaic Greece, what a teacher conveyed to a pupil was not merely information or knowledge, but a way of life, and there was no differentiation between the knowledge and a person possessing it. This renders Wach's distinction between a master and a teacher inapplicable to the study of the ancient Greek society.

5 On Nestor, Frame 2009.

6 Homerus, *Ilias* 1.252.

7 Homerus, *Ilias* 11.832.

8 Gantz 1993, 146–147.

9 On Cheiron, Kirk 1970, 152–162; Gantz 1993, 144–147. According to the early sources, the pupils of Cheiron were Achilles (Homerus, *Ilias* 11.832; Hesiodus, fragment 155 [West, 87–90]); Jason (Hesiodus, *Theogonia* 1001, fragment 36 [West]); Asclepius (Pindar, *Pythia* 3.5–7; *Nemea* 3.54 f.). Later authors narrate the myth of his catasterism: after an enraged pupil attempts to murder him, Cheiron turns into a star. According to some authors, he was assaulted by Heracles (Eratosthenes, *Katasterismoi* 40; Hyginus, *Astronomica* 2.38) or Achilles (Ovidius, *Fasti* 5.379–414).

The motif of an Olympian god as a teacher is also very old. Already in the Homeric epics we find a plethora of humans who have been taught by the gods themselves.[10] Sometimes they are marginal figures, such as the unlucky Skamandrios whose death is described in the fifth book of the *Iliad:*

> Strophios' son Skamandrios, skilled in the hunt, was caught by Menelaos son of Atreus with his sharp spear—he was a fine huntsman: Artemis herself had taught him to shoot down all the wild things that the forest breeds in the mountains. But Artemis the archer-goddess did not protect him then, nor his archer's skill in which he had excelled before: but the son of Atreus, the great spearman Menelaos, stabbed him with his spear as he fled before him.[11]

This is a typical episode from Homeric battle descriptions. The singer does not only dwell on the moment of death, but provides background information about the fallen hero, evoking the audience's empathy. We find out that Skamandrios was a skilled hunter, but that in the open battle a spear triumphs over arrows. In order to convey the idea of a skilled huntsman, the epic describes Skamandrios as taught by the goddess of hunting personally.

A more general application of the idea of divine teachers can be found in Hesiod's epic *Works and Days.* Illustrative of the way the Greeks conceived divine gifts is the story of the creation of the first woman, Pandora. Physical and mental qualities such as beauty, grace, and deceitfulness are described as gifts of the gods, but skills such as handiwork and weaving are the result of divine "teaching." Zeus thus commands the gods to create a woman:

> He told renowned Hephaestus at once to mix earth with water, to add in a human voice and strength, and to model upon the immortal goddesses' aspect the fair lovely form of a maiden. Athene he told to teach her crafts, to weave the embroidered web, and golden Aphrodite to shower charm about her head, and painful yearning and consuming obsession; to put in a bitch's mind and a knavish nature, that was his instruction to Hermes the go-between, the dog-killer.[12]

10 On gods in Homer, Dietrich 1965; Griffin 1980, 144–204; Burkert 1985, 119 ff.; Kullmann 1985; Feeney 1991, 5–56; Emlyn-Jones 1992; Kearns 2004. On the role of Artemis, Petrovic 2010.

11 Homerus, *Ilias* 5.49–56.

12 Hesiodus, *Opera et dies* 60–68. All translations of Hesiodic poems are by M.L. West, West 1988.

2 Gods as Masters of Poetry

The idea of a divine teacher is present in the entire epic cycle. In the *Odyssey* we encounter a fine singer, Demodocus, who performs at the court of the hospitable Phaeacians. He has many different poems in his repertoire and manages to impress Odysseus with a skillful rendering of an episode from the Trojan War—an event which Odysseus himself had witnessed. Odysseus praises the singer in the following manner:

> Demodocus, I give you the highest possible praise. Either Zeus' Child, the Muse, or Apollo must have been your teacher. For it is remarkable how well you sing the tale of the Achaeans' fate and of all their achievements, sufferings, and toils. It is almost as though you had been with them yourself or heard the story from one who was.[13]

In this passage, the origin of song is ascribed to the teachings of a divine being, and divine knowledge is equated with that of an eye-witness. This strategy recalls the famous invocations of the Muses, a typical motif of epic poetry, which attributed to the gods the information the epics provided.[14] The singer of the *Iliad* even claims to be devoid of all knowledge—it is the Muses who provide all factual information:

> Tell me now, you Muses who have your homes on Olympos—you are gods, and attend all things and know all things, but we hear only the report and have no knowledge—tell me who were the leaders of the Danaans and their rulers. As for the mass of men, I could not tell of them or name them, not even if I had ten tongues and ten mouths, and in me a voice unbreakable and a heart of bronze, unless the Olympian Muses, daughters of Zeus who holds the aegis, were to tell over the names of all the many who came to Ilios. Yet I will give the leaders of the ships, and the ships in all their number.[15]

Ascribing the omniscience of the narrator to the Muses posed problems and important questions about the boundaries of human knowledge and perception and the truthfulness of song. How can one explain inconsistencies and paradoxes in poetry? The Hesiodic corpus contains one of the most cunning solutions to this paradox and provides the most enduring and influential description of a poetic initiation.[16] At the beginning of a poem which outlines the history of the universe through the lens of divine genealogy, Hesiod invokes the Muses:

> From the Muses of Helicon let us begin our singing, that haunt Helicon's great and holy mountain, and dance on their soft feet round the violet-dark spring and the altar of the mighty son of Kronos (1–4). [...] And once they taught Hesiod fine singing, as he tended his lambs below holy Helicon. This is what the goddesses said to me first, the Olympian Muses, daughters of Zeus the aegis-bearer: 'Shepherds that camp in the wild, disgraces, merest bellies: we know to tell many lies that sound like truth, but we know to sing reality, when we will.' So said mighty Zeus' daughters, the sure of utterance, and they gave me a branch of springing bay to pluck for a staff, a handsome one, and they breathed into me wondrous voice (*audèn théspin*), so that I should celebrate things of the future and things that were aforetime. And they told me to sing of the family of blessed ones who are forever, and first and last always to sing of themselves.[17]

In this passage Hesiod presents the Muses as teachers of poets, but the teaching process itself seems to be very short, almost instantaneous. It consists of a proclamation, a gift of a staff and a voice, which the goddesses breathe into Hesiod, thus making a poet out of a shepherd. The breathing of a voice into a poet recalls Homer's claim quoted above, which negates the possibility of telling a story without the help of a Muse. However, there is more to Hesiod's depiction of a voice, as Ford notes:[18] the Greek word *audé* always denotes a human voice in Homer and Hesiod,[19] and *théspis* means "divine," so that the unity of the two represents an oxymoron and implies that the poet is bridging the gap between human and divine.[20]

Hesiod's striking innovation is the explanation of lies in poetry—the Muses are capable of teaching a poet "many lies" and also the "reality." They are the ultimate source of all bardic information and the teachers of poets.[21]

Poets, in turn, were the most important teachers of men in archaic Greece. Herodotus (2.53.2) famously stated that it was Homer and Hesiod who taught the Greeks the ancestry of the gods, gave the gods their epithets, distributed their honors and areas of expertise, and described their outward forms. Herodotus' statement is generally taken as a true representation of the impact of early epic on the visual and literary representation of the Greek gods. Greek epic was viewed as fundamental for the whole of Greek culture. Homeric and Hesiodic portraits of the gods were perceived as paradigmatic both in poetry and in the visual arts.

The epics were also seen as a reservoir of all kinds of knowledge—military, geographical, even medical.[22] This is why all subsequent pretenders to the position of teacher of wisdom had to challenge early Greek epic as the source of

13 Homerus, *Odyssea* 8.487–491. All translations of the *Odyssey* are by E.V. Rieu, Homer (Rieu) 1946.
14 On the Muses in ancient literature, Spentzou/Fowler 2002, 1–28 (with bibliography); Morrison 2007, 73–90.
15 Homerus, *Ilias* 2.484–493.
16 On the Hesiodic narrator in the Theogony, Stoddard 2004.
17 Hesiodus, *Theogonia* 22–35.
18 Ford 1992, 173.
19 For a discussion of the meaning of *audé* in early Greek epic, Ford 1992, 173–180.
20 Stoddard 2004, 86.
21 On various interpretations of these verses, Morrison 2007, 76 f. (with bibliography).
22 Plato's dialogue *Ion* provides a very good insight into the kind of specialist knowledge ancient Greeks hoped to learn by reading Homer. On this dialogue, Verdenius 1943; Murray 1981; Murray 1996; Ferrari 1989; Morris 1993.

fiercest competition.[23] Poetry, especially epic, was seen as the ultimate and best educational text by the ancient Greeks throughout their entire history. It was always central in the curriculum.

At first, the setting for the performance and memorizing of educational poetry was the aristocratic symposium.[24] Essentially a drinking party following an evening meal, a symposium was a gathering of male members of the elite which usually involved the performance of poetry. In the classical period, not only aristocrats, but all wealthy male citizens begin to have access to education. However even in cities like Athens, education was not a systematic process organized by the city but was left to individuals to set up. In his dialogue *Protagoras*, Plato sums up the efforts undertaken by parents in educating their children and provides an important testimony of the role of poets and poetry in Greek education:

> After this they send them to school and charge the master to take far more pains over their children's good behaviour than over their letters and harp-playing. The masters take pains accordingly, and the children, when they have learnt their letters and are getting to understand the written word as before they did only the spoken, are furnished with works of good poets to read as they sit in class, and are made to learn them off by heart: here they meet with many admonitions, many descriptions and praises and eulogies of good men in times past, that the boy may eagerly imitate them and yearn to become even as they. Then also the music-masters, in a similar sort, take pains for their self-restraint, and see that their young charges do not go wrong: moreover, when they learn to play the harp, they are taught the works of another set of good poets, the song-makers, while the master accompanies them on the harp; and they insist on familiarizing the boys' souls with the rhythms and scales, that they may gain in gentleness, and by advancing in rhythmic and harmonic grace may be efficient in speech and action; for the whole of man's life requires the graces of rhythm and harmony. Again, over and above all this, people send their sons to a trainer, that having improved their bodies they may perform the orders of their minds, which are now in fit condition, and that they may not be forced by bodily faults to play the coward in wars and other duties. This is what people do, who are most able; and the most able are the wealthiest. Their sons begin school at the earliest age, and are freed from it at the latest.[25]

Poets who claimed to have had divine inspiration were perceived as the ultimate authorities in all aspects of life. In recognition of their immense influence and importance, poets themselves even began to receive cultic honors. Homer, "the

23 On the reactions of early philosophers and sophists to Homeric epics, Richardson 1975; Feeney 1991, 5–56; Ford 2002, 46–66.

24 On the symposium as a setting for the performance and interpretation of poetry, Murray 1990; Slater 1991; Stehle 1997, 213–226; Ford 2002, 25–45.

25 Plato, *Protagoras* 325e–326c (trans. by W.R.M. Lamb, Lamb 1967).

educator of Greece,"[26] a poet with the greatest influence, received cultic honors in many Greek cities, mostly those claiming to be his place of origin.[27] The establishing of the cult of poets in many Greek cities can be interpreted as yet further evidence that the ancient Greeks saw the gods and divine beings in general as the greatest source of authority and the best teachers. Numerous praises of Homer as the offspring of the Muses or the messenger of the gods can be found in Greek literature.[28] In the Hellenistic era the divine status of poets seems to have been subject to inflation—so numerous are the poets to whom divinity was ascribed, that it becomes a commonplace. "Homer was not a man, but a god" was one of the first sentences children learned to write in the Hellenistic period.[29]

3 Gods as Teachers of Rituals

The long Homeric *Hymn to Demeter* tells the story of the abduction of Persephone, Demeter's daughter, and the goddess' subsequent anger and refusal to allow the growth of crops. Unable to find her daughter, devastated Demeter withdraws from Olympus and lives in human guise in Eleusis, in the house of king Keleos. There the goddess orders the king to institute her cult in the following manner:

> Now, let the whole people build me a great temple with an altar below it, under the citadel's sheer wall, above Kallichoron, where the hill juts out. As to the rites, I myself will instruct you on how in future you can propitiate me with holy performance.[30]

After the release of her beloved daughter from captivity, Demeter allows the crops to grow in abundance, goes to the kings on earth, and "taught them the sacred service and showed the beautiful mysteries."[31]

A similar story is told in the second part of the Homeric Hymn to Apollo, which narrates the legend about the founding of the Delphic oracle. The god himself searches far and wide for a suitable place, until he is directed to the right spot on a mountain slope. After Apollo has located a fitting site for his oracular shrine, he realizes that priests will be needed. He then glimpses a ship full of Cretan men, whom he decides will be fit to serve as priests in his sanctuary. The god himself leads them in a procession, singing and dancing to his cult hymn the *paián*, and teaches the humans how to perform a procession to the sanctuary.

26 Plato, *Respublica* 606e2–3.

27 On the cults of Homer, Clay 2004, 74 f. and 136–143.

28 Skiadas 1965.

29 Murray 1996, 19.

30 *Hymni Homerici* 2.271–274. All translations of *Hymni Homerici* are by M.L. West, West 2003.

31 *Hymni Homerici* 2.473 ff.

After bringing the sailors to his temple at Delphi, the god provides them with the instructions and rules of conduct in his sanctuary. Not only has the god established his own sanctuary, brought the priests, and taught them how to dance in a ritual procession, but he also provides a sacred regulation which governs priestly duties and obligations in the sanctuary.[32] The leader of the Cretans is worried, since the land to which Apollo brought them is barren and rocky. He addresses the god and asks him: "Lord, as you have brought us far from our dear ones and our native land,—so it must have pleased your heart—how are we going to feed ourselves now? That's what we want you to consider."[33]

Apollo replies:

> Each of you must just keep a knife in his right hand and keep slaughtering sheep continually: they will be available in abundance, as many as the thronging peoples bring for me. Watch over my temple and welcome the peoples as they gather here and regard my will above all.[34]

Apollo's response is a sacred regulation as it clearly outlines the main duties and responsibilities of the priests—they are to conduct sacrifices, guard the temple, receive visitors, and announce the oracles.

According to the wide-spread and broadly attested belief of the ancient Greeks, gods themselves introduced their rituals and taught humans how to perform them. In the mythic stories of the origins of temples and rituals, gods appear, as in the examples quoted above, and instruct people in their worship. Intriguing are also the depictions on painted pottery and reliefs of gods who partake in sacrifices and libations.[35] In cults, the idea of gods as teachers of ritual and the ultimate source of religious regulations was reflected in the custom of consulting the oracle, mostly that of Apollo in Delphi and later in Didyma, on matters pertaining to cult and sacred regulations.[36] A large portion of transmitted oracular responses from Delphi pertains to matters of cult. Fontenrose 1978 analyzed the topics of all transmitted Delphic oracular responses and concluded that the oracle was regularly consulted by states in all matters relating to religious life. Oracular consultations pertained to cult foundations, sacrifices and offerings, ritual ordinances, rights of sanctuary and immunity, patron deities of cities, ritual customs, and the like. The Greeks were very reluctant to introduce even the slightest changes in their rituals without first consulting

32 On sacred regulations, Parker 2004; Lupu 2005, 3–112; Petrovic/Petrovic 2006.
33 *Hymni Homerici* 3.527–529.
34 *Hymni Homerici* 3.536–540.
35 See on this Simon 1953 and Patton 2009.
36 On the role of Apolline oracles in general, Parke/Wormell 1956; Fontenrose 1978; Fontenrose 1988; Parke 1985; Parker 2000; Busine 2005. On the Apolline oracles and Greek sacred regulations, Bowden 2005; Petrovic/Petrovic 2006.

Apollo, who was seen as a mediator between gods and men. Apollo was thus understood to be the supreme exegete of religious rituals and the cult of the dead. To find out how they might best please the gods, the Greeks consulted the Delphic oracle.

The mediating role of the Delphic god is something the early texts stress time and again. The Homeric *Hymn to Apollo* repeatedly insists that the god's prime concern was to "communicate to the mortals the immortal will of Zeus."[37]

Plato's Socrates sums up this legislative role of the god when he states in his *Republic* that the first, most important, and fairest objects of legislation are reserved for the Delphic Apollo, and that these objects of legislation are:

> The founding of temples, and sacrifices, and other forms of worship of gods, daemons, and heroes; and likewise the burial of the dead and the services we must render to the dwellers in the world beyond to keep them gracious. For of such matters we neither know anything nor in the founding of our city if we are wise shall we entrust them to any other or make use of any other interpreter than the God of our fathers. For this God surely is in such matters for all mankind the interpreter of the religion of their fathers who from his seat in the middle and at the very navel of the earth delivers his interpretation.[38]

4 Epilogue

According to Plato's *Apology* (21a–e),[39] when Chaerephon asked the Delphic oracle if anyone was wiser than his friend Socrates, the god's response was: "No one." Socrates was puzzled at this response, since he was convinced he knew nothing at all, so he went to question men who were reputed to be wise. However, his discussions with the wise men only disclosed that they were not wise at all. Socrates concluded that the oracle was correct after all, since he, knowing that he was not wise, still knew more than those who thought themselves wise and yet were not. Being aware of his own ignorance made him wiser than these men. However, this quest for knowledge was also his downfall, as Socrates remarked, since the wise men with whom he conversed began to hate him.

In his version of *Apology* 14 f., Xenophon offers a slightly different account. According to Xenophon's version, to Chaerephon's inquiry the Delphic oracle answered in the presence of many people that no man was more free, more just, or more prudent than Socrates. In his defense speech, Socrates tells this story and goes on to remind the Athenians of the oracle given to the Spartan law-giver

37 *Hymni Homerici* 3.131 f. See also vv. 247–253; 287–293.
38 Plato, *Respublica* 427b–c (trans. by P. Shorey, Shorey 1969).
39 Plato, *Apologia* 21a–e.

Lycurgus. According to legend, Lycurgus entered the Delphic shrine, and the god addressed him thus: "I am pondering whether to call you god or man."

The story about Socrates and the Delphic shrine seems to be based on a conviction that the gods are the ultimate teachers, be it of handiwork, agriculture, or wisdom. Even the authority of a rational skeptic (Socrates) was derived from the Delphic oracle. He is, however, just one in a plethora of wise men whom the Greeks perceived as sanctioned by the Delphic god or as divine in origin. The example of the Spartan law-giver Lycurgus demonstrates that also the laws of the states were sometimes seen as divine in origin and perceived as taught to humans by the gods.

Early masters of wisdom were often associated with the divine sphere in one way or another. Pythagoras, often perceived as the first philosopher, asserted that he was born many times. He claimed to have inherited his soul from a distinguished line of ancestors and to remember his past existences. According to some authors, Pythagoras was a miracle worker, and his birth was prophesied by the Delphic oracle. His mother was told that she would have a son supremely beautiful, wise, and beneficial to human kind. According to other legends, he was a son of Apollo.[40]

The Sicilian philosopher Empedocles went even further and claimed that he had lived before for 10,000 years in various shapes—as a boy, girl, tree, and a fish in the sea.[41] The theory of the transmigration of the soul can be perceived as similar to a claim of supernatural old age, as both Empedocles and Pythagoras claimed to remember their past existences. At the same time, the extraordinary belief in the possibility of metempsychosis connects these thinkers to the divine sphere since, in myth, Greek gods are able to take any shape, human or animal.

Empedocles even claimed to be divine and presented himself thus in his poetry:

> My friends, who dwell in the great city sloping down to yellow Acragas, hard by the citadel, busied with goodly works, all hail! I go about among you an immortal god, no more a mortal, so honored of all, as is meet, crowned with fillets and flowery garlands. Straightway as soon as I enter with these, men and women, into flourishing towns, I am reverenced and tens of thousands follow, to learn where is the path which leads to welfare, some desirous of oracles, others suffering from all kinds of diseases, desiring to hear a message of healing.[42]

40 For testimonies, see Riedweg 2005, 5 f., 59, 72 f.

41 Diels/Kranz 31, B 117.

42 Diels/Kranz 31 B 112 (trans. by R.D. Hicks, Diogenes Laertius [Hicks] 1972).

Empedocles presents himself as a divine teacher, honored as a god among humans because of his authority and vast knowledge. According to his teaching, wise men such as healers, prophets, poets, and rulers can become gods.[43]

The search for ultimate wisdom, which leads to exceptional knowledge, also transgresses the boundaries between human and divine. Empedocles threw himself into an active volcano, wishing to prove his divine nature. In the story of Socrates and the Delphic oracle, the oracular answer of Apollo sets Socrates on a path which ultimately leads him to perdition. In both Xenophon's and Plato's stories, it is the oracle of Apollo which incites Socrates to question the wisdom of his fellow Athenians and ultimately leads to his death.

In the Hellenistic age, when kings customarily received divine honors, Euhemerus of Messene postulated that the gods were once nothing more than wise humans. Since they have indebted humanity by their benefactions and great deeds, they received divine honors. His original writings are lost and are transmitted as quotations of later writers. His theory is encapsulated in the following passage:

> As regards the gods, then, men of ancient times have handed down to later generations two different conceptions: Certain of the gods, they say, are eternal and imperishable, such as the sun and the moon and the other stars of the heavens, and the winds as well and whatever else possesses a nature similar to theirs; for of each of these the genesis and duration are from everlasting to everlasting.
>
> But the other gods, we are told, were terrestrial beings who attained to immortal honour and fame because of their benefactions to mankind, such as Heracles, Dionysus, Aristaeus, and the others who were like them.[44]

After the poets and philosophers, in the Hellenistic age, rulers came to be associated with the divine sphere and to receive divine honors.[45] Perhaps as a result of this inflation of divine status, Callimachus, a poet active in the third century B.C.E., relates the following story about the seven sages in his first Iambus: Bathycles, a man from Arcadia, was on his deathbed. He summoned his sons and left them a golden cup to give to whoever is best of the seven wise men. His middle son went to Miletus and offered it to Thales, but Thales sent it to Bias, he to Periander, Periander passed it on to Solon, who gave it to Chilon; from him, the cup went to Pittacus, Cleobulus, and back to Thales. Thales, having received it twice, sent the cup to Didyma, to be dedicated to Apollo. Bowing to divine

43 Diels/Kranz 31 B 146.

44 Diodorus, Fragments of *Library of History* 6,1,2 as quoted by Eusebius, *Praeparatio Evangelica* 2.2.59B–61 (trans. by C.H. Oldfather, Diodorus Siculus [Oldfather] 1935).

45 On the cult of rulers, Habicht 1970 is still fundamental. For a discussion of scholarship and an overview of older literature see Chaniotis 2003.

knowledge and acceptance of the boundary between the divine and the human was, after all, the ultimate sign of wisdom.

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